

BLADEN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
LAND USE PLAN
JUNE 1999

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|----|
| Section | | |
| I. | Bladen County Land Use Plan | 1 |
| | Introduction | 1 |
| | Location and Context | 1 |
| II. | Land Use Plan Process | 5 |
| | Introduction | 5 |
| | Background Research and Analysis | 5 |
| 5 | Community Visioning and Goal Setting | 6 |
| III. | Background Research and Analysis | 7 |
| | Introduction | 7 |
| | Physical Development History | 7 |
| | Population & Housing Characteristics | 10 |
| | Socioeconomic Characteristics | 14 |
| | Community Services/Infrastructure | 16 |
| | Environmental and Natural Resources | 19 |
| | Cultural and Historic Resources | 21 |
| IV. | Community Visioning | 23 |
| | Introduction | 23 |
| | “Bring on Bladen” Land Use Vision | 23 |
| | Specific Development Goals | 24 |
| V. | Land Use Plan Recommendations | 25 |
| | The Proposed Land Use Plan | 25 |
| | Implementing the Plan | 28 |
| | Conclusions | 29 |

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RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION
1999-2010 BLADEN COUNTY, NC
LAND USE PLAN

WHEREAS, the Bladen County Planning Board is empowered to prepare, adopt and recommend plans within the planning and zoning limits of the County, in accordance with G.S. 153A-321 of the North Carolina General Statutes; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board has prepared a specific document entitled 1999-2010 Bladen County, NC Land Use Plan designed to provide Bladen County, a general statement of desirable objectives to guide future growth, change and development in Bladen County; and

WHEREAS, by its approval, the Board of Commissioners recognize that certain elements of the Plan will require more intensive planning before specific commitments are made to their implementations; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners further recognize that the Land Use Plan Map is one of several items of relevant information used to make decisions about future land uses and is subject to future re-evaluation and changes by existing and future Planning Boards and Board of Commissioners;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Bladen County hereby adopts the 1999-2010 Bladen County, NC Land Use Plan and Map on the 28th day of February, 2002.

BY: _____

ATTEST: _____

1. Bladen County Land Use Plan

Introduction

Since the beginning of this century, the United States has become increasingly more urban with approximately 80% of its population now living within a metropolitan area. As the United States has experienced growth and urban development, so has North Carolina. Our state has changed a great deal, specifically in the past two decades; growing from 5 million in total population to 6.6 million in 1990, with a projected growth of 7.7 million by the year 2000. Approximately 66% of North Carolinian's now live in a metropolitan area (Source of Data: Office of State Planning and US Bureau of Census).

The need for local land use planning and smart growth throughout this state is paramount. Many of the growth and land use elements that need to be addressed include an array of environmental and preservation issues, as well as fiscal issues related with expanding infrastructure and services to new development. Bladen County has recognized this need to plan and grow smart.

In 1997, Bladen County citizens participated in a strategic planning process to identify goals and objectives for the future growth of the county. As a result, many areas that required additional research were identified. One of the areas identified was land use growth within the county. In the strategic plan "Bring on Bladen", one of the objectives was to create a land use plan addressing the physical growth and development of the county. The County Commissioners proceeded to request services from the Division of Community Assistance to lead their new Planning Board through a Land Use Planning process, which is covered later.

The purpose of this land use plan is to identify the physical and economic issues involved in the future development of the county and establish direction for the future growth to ensure a safe, attractive, and pleasant living and working environment. The plan's horizon is the year 2010.

Location and Context

Bladen County is located in southeastern North Carolina and is a part of the Sunbelt area that offers moderate temperatures and desirable weather during spring and fall. The county contains natural beauty in its many lakes, forests, and the Cape Fear River. Bladen County is a rural county that is in close proximity to amenities offered by larger metropolitan areas, such as Fayetteville and Wilmington. This location allows the community to retain its quaint and friendly character, while preserving its ancestry. In addition, the county is focused on the future, pursuing quality opportunities to grow. A strong

work ethic and high productivity, which resulted from the agricultural heritage of the people of Bladen County, have helped make success stories for this rural community.



Figure 1: Local farming operation.

Bladen County is the fourth largest county in North Carolina, with 879 square miles. It is bisected by the Cape Fear River. The county seat of Elizabethtown, at the center of the county, is thirty minutes from I-95, forty-five minutes from Interstate 40, and one hour from the State Port at Wilmington and the Atlantic Ocean. Its location in Southeastern North Carolina assures Bladen of a good climate, with an average annual temperature of 63 degrees, precipitation of 49.1”, and an annual snowfall of less than 4”.

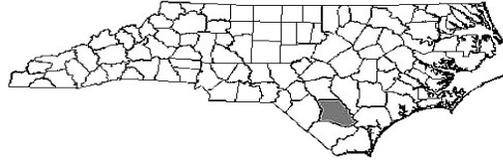


Figure 2: Bladen County location map.

Bladen is a county rich in history and tradition. The Highland Scots first settled it in 1734 when they came to the Cape Fear Valley seeking political and religious freedom. Bladen County was named for Martin Bladen, Lord Commissioner of Trade and Plantation. The county’s boundaries in the year 1734 were described as, “No less than man dared to travel west.” Of the 100 counties in North Carolina, 55 were once a part of Bladen County, which accounts for the name “Bladen, The Mother County”. Many of the descendants of these first settlers still live in the county and, like their ancestors; they too are hardworking and freedom loving people. Bladen County played an important role in the history of our nation, as we know it today. During the Battle of Elizabethtown on August 29, 1781 a small band of Whig Patriots chased an overpowering and terror stricken army of Tories of the Crown of England into what is now known as “the Tory Hole”. This ravine runs from the main street of Elizabethtown to the Cape Fear River and it is where the Tories met their defeat and the Tory power was broken. The North Carolina Historical Commission recognized the area as a historical site in 1939, and on May 20, 1984 the Tory Hole Historical Park and Amphitheater was dedicated for the enjoyment of residents, visitors and tourists.

Bladen is indeed proud of its history and heritage. A showcase of beautiful and historic homes or sites can be seen in Bladen County: “Harmony Hall”, home of Col. James Richardson of Revolutionary fame; The Purdie place, overlooking the Cape Fear River from a high bluff; “Oakland”, the home of General Thomas Brown. The site of the home of “Whistler’s Mother” at Clarkton is of great interest to many visitors. Only the brick walls remain of the hallowed spot “Owen Hill” the home of Governor John Owen, Bladen’s only Governor.



Figure 3: Oakland Plantation.



Figure 4: Harmony Hall.

Bladen County contained over 1,000 lakes at one time. Since many of them are of an oval shape and point in the same direction, it has been speculated that they were formed by a bombardment of meteors 100,000 years ago. The lakes have developed into important recreational areas and tourist attractions. Seven of the lakes remain and these, plus the Cape Fear River, the South and the Black Rivers are important water resources that need to be maintained and protected to assure quality of life.



Figure 5: Singletary Lake

White Lake is one of five lakes in the Bladen Lakes region. The other lakes are Bay Tree Lake, Singletary Lake, Jones Lake, and Salters Lake. It has been said that White Lake is the most beautiful body of water in the eastern United States. North Carolina's Travel and Promotion Division bill it as the "most used lake in North Carolina". It has also been labeled as the "Nation's Safest Beach". It is truly a child's paradise in that there are no currents, no tides, no hazardous depressions or any real dangers of any kind to swimmers. Its white sandy bottom and crystal clear waters are the treasures of this resort community.



Figure 6: White Lake.



Figure 7: Jones Lake.

Bladen County offers fundamental and progressive education in its public school system and a local community college. Bladen Community College was established in 1967 and is located near Dublin, N.C. Colleges offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs within an hour's drive of Bladen County are: The University of North Carolina at Wilmington, University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Fayetteville State University, and Methodist College in Fayetteville.

Bladen County has a commissioner-manager form of government with nine Commissioners comprising the governing body. The County Manager is the chief administrative officer of the county who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Board of Commissioners. There are over 300 county employees providing public, healthcare, and protective services to the 28,663 county residents.

The region has welcomed new and expanding industry over the 1990's. It has a moderately low cost of living compared to the nation as a whole. The average unemployment rate in 1996 was 6.4. The county has a diversified economy with farming, swine production, textiles, light manufacturing, and tourism being significant contributors.

Bladen County at present maintains her wealth in her citizens and land. She is a county where all who visit are welcome, where industry is growing, where towns are expanding and where people continue to develop higher standards of living.

Figure 8: Land Area and Total Forest.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|----------------|
| Total Land | 562,509 acres | 875.62 sq. mi. |
| Total Area (water and land) | 568,115 acres | 887.68 sq. Mi. |
| State Outdoor Recreation | 75,439 total acres 32,237 land acres | |
| Federal Outdoor Recreation | 119 acres | |
| Local Outdoor Recreation | 92 acres | |

* Bladen County Economic Development Commission's *Bladen Profile* and the Elizabethtown-White Lake Area Chamber of Commerce provided the information contained within the location and context section.

2. Land Use Plan Process

Introduction

Land use planning is a process that involves analyzing current issues, visioning, setting goals for future land use growth, and determining ways to implement and measure the desired goals and outcomes. The process is documented in a form called a “Land Use Plan”. The Land Use Plan provides direction for growth in a community. Land use plans should be reviewed and updated as new growth pressures arise. Therefore, it is not to be viewed as a “once-and-for-all” plan, but rather a product of a process that must be revisited over time. This land use plan looks forward to the year 2010 and it is recommended that it be updated within five years.

As communities begin the land use planning process, a clear methodology should be outlined. The methods that were proposed for this study provided the direction to complete the plan. The two main methods of research for the process included; background research and analysis, and community visioning/goal setting.

Background research and analysis

Before the background research began, brief visioning and goal setting was completed in the “Bring on Bladen” strategic plan (outlined under community visioning and goal setting). The background research includes the following elements; land use, population and housing, socioeconomic, community infrastructure, environmental and natural resources, and cultural and historic resources. John Correllus, GIS Coordinator in Raleigh for the Division of Community Assistance, produced the computerized base map used for gathering the information. Next, the regional office in Fayetteville manipulated the base map to display the research in graphic form, using the ArcView computer mapping and analysis program. A great deal of the data was collected from the State data layers and the Center for Geographic Information and Analysis. All other relevant data was compiled in tabular form. The table below shows all data that was collected. (1990 US Census was used for data.)

Figure 9: Data Collection Table.

| <i>Data categories</i> | <i>Data collected</i> |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Land Use | history, and physical development history/patterns |
| Population & Housing | total persons, age, gender, race, households, total units, age/condition, and value |
| Socioeconomic | persons 16+, labor force, employed, unemployed, per capita income, median family income, poverty level, occupation, industry |
| Community Services/ Infrastructure | transportation, water & sewer, solid waste collection, law enforcement, fire protection, EMS, governmental & educational facilities, libraries |
| Environmental & Natural Resources | soils, air & water quality, wildlife (plants & animals), parks & recreational facilities, |
| Cultural & Historic Resources | potential historic sites/places, archaeological sites, and cultural facilities |

Community visioning and goal setting

Each community must discover what is important in determining the future growth of their town, if they are to know where they want to go. As a part of the plan process, this is of utmost importance. During the 1996-97 strategic planning process titled “Bring on Bladen,” many meetings were held to establish vision and goals. The meetings were held in communities throughout the county, giving all residents equal opportunity to voice their opinion on the future issues and policies in Bladen County. The County Commissioners established a detailed Land Use Vision, which is listed in Section Four. With the general visioning and goal setting complete, the Planning Board began the process to refine the goals and vision for land use. The Planning Board, based on the background research, made the general goals in the strategic plan more specific, recommending location criteria for various land uses.

3. Background Research and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this background research is to provide an understanding of issues and aspects pertaining to the growth and development of Bladen County. As a part of the planning process, existing conditions have been researched and analyzed including; physical development history, population and housing, socioeconomic, community services and infrastructure, environmental and natural resources, and historic resources. The information obtained, along with the analysis, provides a foundation for refining the Bladen County Land Use vision, and establishing clear direct goals for future land use in the county.

Physical Development History

Existing Land Use

The Division of Community Assistance (DCA) and Bladen County planning staff completed a windshield survey of existing land use to establish the general development patterns throughout the county. The survey involved driving the entire county and identifying each land use that existed with a specific color on the map. The Existing Land Use Survey map displays seven land use categories: single family residential, manufactured homes, commercial, industrial, institutional, recreational, and churches/cemeteries. Each use is represented by a dot that is color shaded for identification. As seen on the map, the land uses are scattered throughout the county with higher concentrations of development being located on the southern side of the Cape Fear River near Elizabethtown, Bladenboro, Dublin and Clarkton. In the northern half of the county, land use is located primarily along major highways. (Note: The dot size does not represent each land use in actual size.)

Persons Per Square Mile

After reviewing the existing land use, the population density appears to be higher south of the Cape Fear River. The population density within the county was analyzed to investigate this perceived development pattern. As can be seen on the Persons Per Square Mile map, higher numbers of population are indeed south of the Cape Fear. North of the Cape Fear population densities are twelve (12) persons per square mile and seventeen (17) persons per square mile. South of the Cape Fear in the Clarkton-East Arcadia areas, the population densities are a low of 32 persons per square mile, to a high of 109 persons per square mile in the Elizabethtown area.

Why is there increased development south of the Cape Fear River? Several reasons exist for the higher density of development south of the River. The primary reasons are related to natural impediments to development. The natural impediments include; swamp or marsh, flood hazard, shrink swell soil, and hydric soils.

Natural Impediments to Development

The natural roadblocks to development in Bladen County are significant in many areas. As can be seen on the Natural Impediments to Development map, much of the land is within a flood hazard boundary or swamp/marsh land. Some of the areas are also less suitable for development due to presence of soil with shrink swell qualities. Again, the land with the least impediments to develop is south of the river.

Septic Tank Absorption Fields

The soils determine where septic tanks can be placed. The Septic Tank Absorption Field

map displays soils that have severe to slight limitations to develop. Once again, the land that is more suitable for development is located south of the Cape Fear. The map does not intend to show areas that cannot be developed, but rather displays areas where the various levels of limitation exist.

Water & Sewer

Given the suitability of the land south of the Cape Fear River for development, various communities have been established which now provide water and sewer within the municipalities and to surrounding areas. The water and sewer service areas display the current locations where utilities are available. The areas immediately adjacent to Elizabethtown, Dublin, Bladenboro, and Clarkton have the greatest access to water and sewer lines. It is expected that these areas will continue to experience urban growth patterns, which may lead to potential conflict with other land uses as detailed below in the analysis of cropland. In addition, water lines are in place along Hwy 701 just beyond White Lake, along Hwy 53 north of the State Forest Boundary line, and along 87 south of Elizabethtown to East Arcadia. Higher densities of growth can be expected in these areas in the future. As capital improvements are expanded, specifically water and sewer, the existing physical conditions identified in this section should be considered. The placement of future capital improvements should take into consideration the potential of the surrounding land to ensure smart development that is fiscally and environmentally sound.

Cropland/farmland

The majority of cropland within Bladen County is also south of the Cape Fear River, concentrated around the municipalities. This land for growing crops is and will continue to feel urban development pressure as the county grows. As Bladen County looks forward to 2010 and beyond, the issues related with urban growth and continued agriculture use will become increasingly important. The county should prepare now by defining their policy on growth and their concerns for preservation of the rural landscape. Currently, the state is evaluating its policies on one of the County's major sources of income, hog farming. Many of the state policies will provide guidelines for future hog farming as land uses.



Figure 10: Blueberry Farm.



Figure 11: Cotton Farm.

The importance of agriculture in Bladen County is evident after reviewing the 1992 Census of Agriculture for the County. Out of 562,509 total acres within the county, 127,760 are classified as farmland with 59,791 acres classified as harvested cropland. Nearly 23% of Bladen County's land is devoted to farming. Corn is the primary crop with 28,900 harvested acres, ranking 15th in the state, while peanut production is ranked 10th and sorghum ranked 13th. In livestock, hog production is ranked 3rd in the state with a total number of 675,000. In 1995, the county ranked 9th in total cash receipts received from livestock.

| Census of Agriculture – 1992 for Bladen County | |
|---|--------------|
| Number of Farms | |
| Total Land in Farms, Acres | 607 |
| Average Farm Size, Acres | 127,760 |
| Harvested Cropland, Acres | 210 |
| Average Age of Farmers | 59,791 |
| Average Value of Farm and Buildings | 56 |
| Market Value of All Machinery and Equipment | \$212,372 |
| Total Farm Production Expense | \$23,488,000 |
| | \$46,746,000 |

| CROPS - 1996 | Acres Harvested | Yield | Production | Rank w/in NC |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Tobacco, Lbs. | 4,630 | 1,850 | 8,558,000 | 26 |
| Corn, Bu. | 28,900 | 84 | 2,433,000 | 15 |
| Corn for Silage, Tons | 100 | 10 | 1,000 | 60 |
| Soybeans, Bu. | 15,000 | 24 | 359,000 | 29 |
| Wheat, Bu. | 3,800 | 46 | 174,000 | 38 |
| All Hay, Tons | 2,850 | 2.11 | 6,000 | 61 |
| Sweet Potatoes, Cwt. | * | * | * | * |
| Irish Potatoes, Cwt. | * | * | * | * |
| Cotton, 480-Lb. Bales | 6,300 | 617 | 8,100 | 29 |
| Peanuts, Lbs. | 3,000 | 3,090 | 9,271,000 | 10 |
| Sorghum, Bu. | 260 | 48 | 12,600 | 13 |
| Oats, Bu. | 200 | 55 | 11,000 | 33 |
| Barley, Bu. | * | * | * | * |

| LIVESTOCK | Number | Rank within State |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Hogs and Pigs (Dec. 1, 1996) | 675,000 | 3 |
| Cattle (Jan. 1, 1997) | 6,800 | 57 |
| Beef Cows (Jan. 1, 1997) | 3,300 | 54 |
| Milk Cows (Jan. 1, 1997) | * | * |
| Broilers Produced (1996) | 7,000,000 | 22 |
| Turkeys Raised (1996) | 900,000 | 12 |
| All Chickens (Dec. 1, 1996) | * | * |

| CASH RECEIPTS - 1995 | Dollars | Rank within State |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Crops | \$31,641,000 | 33 |
| Livestock | \$92,801,000 | 9 |
| Total | \$125,189,000 | 15 |

Figure 12: 1992 Census of Agriculture.

Population & Housing

Total Population

In 1990, the total census of the population figure for Bladen County was 28,663. This was a decline of -6.4% in total population from the 1980 count of 30,488. The Office of State Planning (OSP) is projecting an increase in the total population for the year 2000 and the year 2010. The OSP estimates that the population will be 30,847 in 2000, and 31,447 in 2010. It is not expected that these changes in population will have a major impact on the land use, given the small percentages of increase. However, the specific components of the total population such as; age, gender and racial mix need to be analyzed.

| TOTAL POPULATION | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|----------|------------|
| YEAR | TOTAL | ABSOLUTE | % INCREASE |
| 1910 | 18,080 | - | - |
| 1920 | 19,761 | 1,755 | 9.7% |
| 1930 | 22,389 | 2,628 | 13.3% |
| 1940 | 27,156 | 4,767 | 21.3% |
| 1950 | 29,703 | 2,547 | 9.4% |
| 1960 | 28,881 | -822 | -2.8% |
| 1970 | 26,477 | -2,404 | -8.3% |
| 1980 | 30,488 | 4,011 | 15.1% |
| 1990 | 28,663 | -1,825 | -6.4% |
| *2000 (Source: NCOSP) | 30,847 | 2,184 | 7.6% |
| *2010 (Source: NCOSP) | 31,447 | 600 | 1.9% |

Figure 13: Total Population.

Age/Gender

The most interesting aspect of the population is the age component. According to the 1990 census of population for the county, nearly seventy-one percent (71%) of the total population was below fifty (50) years of age. The younger population will be in need of continuing employment opportunities within the county. The working age segment of the population, age 18-54 consists of nearly 50% of the total population.

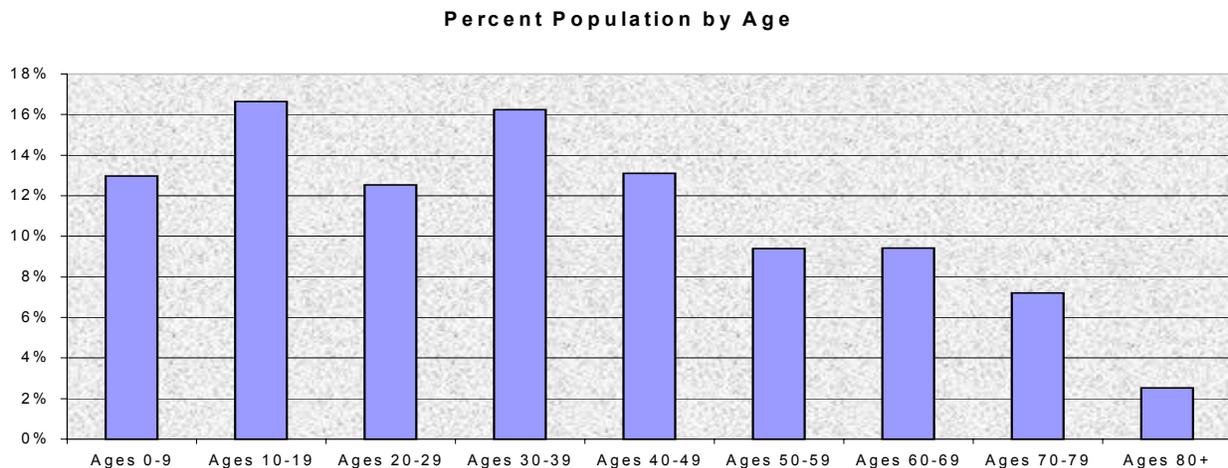


Figure 14: Percent Population by Age.

| AGE (1990) | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| <i>Ages</i> | | <i>County Population</i> | | <i>Percentage</i> |
| | Under 1 year | 310 | | |
| | 1 and 2 years | 874 | | |
| | 3 and 4 years | 605 | | |
| | 5 years | 314 | | |
| | 6 years | 356 | | |
| Ages 0-9 | 7 to 9 years | 1,258 | 3717 | 12.97% |
| | 10 and 11 years | 1,037 | | |
| | 12 and 13 years | 928 | | |
| | 14 years | 503 | | |
| | 15 years | 494 | | |
| | 16 years | 455 | | |
| | 17 years | 471 | | |
| | 18 years | 528 | | |
| Ages 10-19 | 19 years | 350 | 4,766 | 16.63% |
| | 20 years | 284 | | |
| | 21 years | 434 | | |
| | 22 to 24 years | 1,073 | | |
| Ages 20-29 | 25 to 29 years | 1,801 | 3592 | 12.53% |
| | 30 to 34 years | 2,273 | | |
| Ages 30-39 | 35 to 39 years | 2,383 | 4,656 | 16.24% |
| | 40 to 44 years | 2,032 | | |
| Ages 40-49 | 45 to 49 years | 1,725 | 3,757 | 13.11% |
| | 50 to 54 years | 1,434 | | |
| Ages 50-59 | 55 to 59 years | 1,258 | 2,692 | 9.39% |
| | 60 and 61 years | 534 | | |
| | 62 to 64 years | 881 | | |
| Ages 60-69 | 65 to 69 years | 1,281 | 2696 | 9.41% |
| | 70 to 74 years | 1,226 | | |
| Ages 70-79 | 75 to 79 years | 840 | 2,066 | 7.21% |
| | 80 to 84 years | 375 | | |
| Ages 80+ | 85 years and over | 346 | 721 | 2.52% |
| | | 28,663 | 28,663 | 100.00% |

Figure 15: Age.

The Population Pyramid (1990 Age/Gender) shows that an equal distribution exists between the genders in childbearing years, which may have direct impacts on the schools for the decades to come as well as the growth in total population within the county. As children reach the working force age within the county, will they settle in or migrate to other counties to find employment. This brief analysis shows that a labor force will exist in the future--prospective economic development can observe these charts and see that the potential exists. The questions then become: What will be the educational levels of the work force?, What training opportunities are available within the county?, and Can the county absorb additional settlement? All of these questions and their answers will influence the growth and development of the county. If the county runs out of room for suitable residential growth, that will have a direct

impact on how it grows. If the amount of land suitable for industry is depleted, again, that will affect the development.

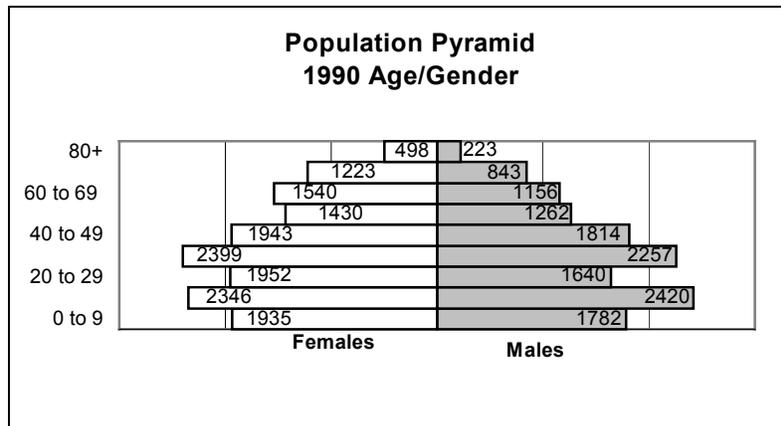


Figure 16:

Population Pyramid.

Racial Mix

The racial characteristics of the population vary from the state as a whole. In 1990, the black and white segments of the population were the major racial groups with the black segment accounting for 39% of the total and the white segment accounting for 59%. In comparison with the State in 1990, the black segment was 22% of the total and the white segment was 76%.

In addition to the black and white racial groups, it was also noted in the 1990 census, that a significant number of persons were in the American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut segments of the total population. This racial group accounted for 1.5% of the total population in Bladen County. Other racial groups included Asian or Pacific Islander and other race.

| RACE (1990) | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | COUNTY | % of Total Pop. | STATE | % of Total Pop. |
| White | 16,945 | 59% | 5,011,248 | 76% |
| Black | 11,237 | 39% | 1,455,340 | 22% |
| American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut | 431 | 1.5% | 82,606 | 1.2% |
| Asian / P. Islander | 2 | .007% | 50,395 | .8% |
| Other Race | 48 | .2% | 29,048 | .4% |
| TOTAL | 28,663 | - | 6,628,637 | - |

Figure 17: Race.

Housing

Total Housing Units and Occupancy

Bladen County, in 1990, had a total of 2.6 persons per household, with 88% living in a family household. The total number of housing units was 12,685 in 1990. 10,760 of the housing units were occupied. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the occupied units were owner occupied

with 22% being renter occupancy. The county owner occupancy is considerably higher than the state percentage of 68%.

| HOUSEHOLD (1990) | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | COUNTY | STATE |
| Household Total | 10,807 | 2,517,026 |

Figure 18: Household.

| OCCUPANCY AND TENURE | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | COUNTY | STATE |
| Occupied Housing Units | 10,760 | 2,517,026 |
| Owner Occupied | 8,335 | 1,711,817 |
| Percent Owner Occupied | 77.5% | 68.0% |
| Renter Occupied | 2,425 | 805,209 |
| Units In Structure: | | |
| 1-unit, detached | 8,618 | 1,830,229 |
| 1-unit, attached | 101 | 74,318 |
| 2 to 4 units | 422 | 177,700 |
| 5 to 9 units | 129 | 130,801 |
| 10 or more units | 69 | 150,986 |
| Mobile home, trailer, other | 3,346 | 454,159 |

Figure 19: Occupancy & Tenure.

Types of Housing

The two major types of housing include manufactured and stick built (built on the site). These two types appear as single-family homes on individual lots scattered throughout the county, as homes in subdivisions, and as homes in parks.

Most new housing within the county is manufactured units. According to data from the county building inspections office, approximately 53% of their permits are issued for manufactured housing.

Housing Values

The median housing value within the county was \$41,000 in 1990. The median rent in 1990 was \$151. The rise in the number of manufactured housing sales can be related to the employment opportunities within the county and the resulting incomes. It is becoming more affordable to own a manufactured home versus a stick built home. This conclusion is partially supported by the information contained on the following pages.

Socio-economic

Employment Patterns

In 1990, unemployment for the county was 6.79%, which is high when compared with the 4.63% statewide unemployment. The black females and males segments of the population as well as the American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut males were experiencing higher rates of percent unemployed. Also, the per capita and median family incomes were considerably lower than the state, as can be seen on the following page.

| EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS (1990) | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1990 Labor Force Characteristics | | | | | | | |
| Gender/ Race | Persons 16+ | Labor Force: Armed Forces | Labor Force: Civilian | Labor Force | Employed | Unemployed | % Unemployed |
| NORTH CAROLINA | | | | | | | |
| Total | 5,203,230 | 118,432 | 3,401,495 | 3,519,927 | 3,238,414 | 163,081 | 4.63% |
| BLADEN CO. | | | | | | | |
| Total | 21,984 | 42 | 12,994 | 13,036 | 12,109 | 885 | 6.79% |
| WHITE: | | | | | | | |
| Male | | 16 | 4,610 | 4,626 | 4,441 | 169 | 3.65% |
| Female | | 2 | 3,627 | 3,629 | 3,395 | 232 | 6.39% |
| BLACK: | | | | | | | |
| Male | | 24 | 2,103 | 2,127 | 1,942 | 161 | 7.57% |
| Female | | 0 | 2,408 | 2,408 | 2,107 | 301 | 12.50% |
| American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut: | | | | | | | |
| Male | | 0 | 91 | 91 | 75 | 16 | 17.58% |
| Female | | 0 | 114 | 114 | 108 | 6 | 5.26% |
| Asian or Pacific Islander: | | | | | | | |
| Male | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% |
| Female | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% |
| Other Race: | | | | | | | |
| Male | | 0 | 34 | 34 | 34 | 0 | 0% |
| Female | | 0 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0% |

Figure 20: Employment Patterns.

PER CAPITA INCOME 1989

| | COUNTY | STATE |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| Per Capita Income | 9,497 | 12,885 |

Figure 21: Per Capita Income.

| MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME 1989 | | |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| | COUNTY | STATE |
| Median Family Income | 22,175 | 31,548 |

Figure 22: Median Family Income.

Educational Attainment

The educational attainment of the population provides information about the economy and wage earnings within the county in relation to the educational levels. The percentage of those with no diploma and less than 9th grade in the county is 43%, compared with the combined state percentage of 39%. The percentages for the bachelor's degree and postgraduate degrees are also lower for the county when compared with the state. The county equals the state percentages for those who have a high school diploma and for those who hold an associates degree.

| EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (Person's 18 and older) | | | | |
|---|--------|------|-----------|------|
| | County | % | State | % |
| Less than 9th grade | 3,736 | 18% | 557,739 | 11% |
| 9th to 12th grade, no diploma | 5,205 | 25% | 892,459 | 18% |
| High school graduate (includes equivalency) | 6,300 | 30% | 1,496,296 | 30% |
| Some college, no degree | 3,076 | 15% | 958,965 | 19% |
| Associate degree | 1,270 | 6% | 324,173 | 6% |
| Bachelor's degree | 1,073 | 5% | 559,144 | 11% |
| Graduate or professional degree | 398 | 2% | 231,368 | 5% |
| | 21,058 | 100% | 5,020,144 | 100% |

Figure 23: Educational Attainment.

Poverty Status

The percentage below poverty is higher for the county than the state. However, the percentages on the county level may be higher because of the lack of certain infrastructure and services, as well as lower population densities that are not present in urban settings.

| POVERTY STATUS (1989) | | |
|--|--------|-----------|
| | County | State |
| Person's for whom poverty status is determined | 28,089 | 6,397,185 |
| Person's below poverty level | 6,164 | 829,858 |
| % below poverty level | 21.9% | 13% |

Figure 24: Poverty Status.

Industry

Industry within Bladen County is dominated by the Manufacturing sector. The manufacturing of non-durable goods accounted for 22.5% of the industry employment, while the durable goods sector employed 11.7% for a total of 34.2% of employment attributed to

manufacturing. The retail trade sector is considerably lower than the state. This may be an area for potential economic development.

| INDUSTRY (1990) | | | | |
|---|---------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| | COUNTY | % | STATE | % |
| Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries | 769 | 6.4% | 89,581 | 2.8% |
| Mining | 23 | .2% | 5,186 | .2% |
| Construction | 1,084 | 9.0% | 227,706 | 7.0% |
| Manufacturing, non-durable goods | 2,730 | 22.5% | 483,875 | 14.9% |
| Manufacturing, durable goods | 1,417 | 11.7% | 380,496 | 11.7% |
| Transportation | 364 | 3.0% | 121,697 | 3.8% |
| Communications and other public utilities | 284 | 2.3% | 83,663 | 2.6% |
| Wholesale trade | 343 | 2.8% | 135,750 | 4.2% |
| Retail trade | 1,466 | 12.1% | 522,832 | 16.1% |
| Finance, insurance, and real estate | 332 | 2.7% | 166,276 | 5.1% |
| Business and repair services | 330 | 2.7% | 124,685 | 3.9% |
| Personal services | 270 | 2.2% | 90,623 | 2.8% |
| Entertainment and recreation services | 64 | .5% | 32,030 | 1.0% |
| Health services | 728 | 6.0% | 233,437 | 7.2% |
| Educational services | 1,129 | 9.3% | 258,595 | 8.0% |
| Other professional and related services | 346 | 2.9% | 165,200 | 5.1% |
| Public administration | 430 | 3.6% | 116,782 | 3.6% |
| TOTAL | 12,109 | - | 3,238,414 | - |

Figure 25: Industry.

The following paragraphs provide a brief understanding of community services and infrastructure, environmental and natural resources, and cultural and historic resources within the county. Each section gives general information, which helps establish the context of important elements of service within the community. As the county continues to plan in the future, these areas and the planning of their improvements should be linked with the land use plan. This linkage will provide for the smart growth; ensuring that community resources are being appropriated wisely.

Community Services and Infrastructure

Transportation

The local Bladen Area Rural Transportation System (BARTS) provides transportation to a very large and rural county. The system has twelve vans, five of which are lift-equipped, three 24-passenger buses, one mini-van and one car. The primary objective for BARTS is to serve wherever needed, to provide transportation for human service needs such as medical appointments, mental health programs, bill-paying, shopping, etc. to transit-dependent citizens. BARTS provides transportation not only to local destinations, but also out-of-county medical facilities and special events. BARTS is a county entity and is part of the Division on Aging.

BARTS is funded by DOT for administrative and capital cost to which the county provides the necessary match. Elderly transportation is funded by state and federal funds through a block grant allocation.

Currently, the major transportation improvement is the widening of NC HWY 87 north of Tar Heel to four lanes. This widening may contribute to an increase in commuter traffic leaving Bladen County for work in more urban areas like Fayetteville. However, it may increase the possibilities of new industry location.



Figure 26: Construction on NC HWY 87.

Water & Sewer

The Bladen County Water District is the result of a feasibility study conducted in 1986, which recommended a phased approach to providing potable water to rural residents in the County. Phase I began as an extension of the existing systems in the county. The project has been funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Rural Development loan/grant program, in conjunction with General Obligation Bonds that were approved by a vote of the people. The estimated cost per household includes a tap fee of \$75, if requested prior to construction, or \$350, if requested after construction. The average monthly water bills, for a household using an average of 5,000 gallons per month, range from \$23 to \$25.

There are currently six phases to the project which include the following:

1. Phase I completed in 1989 consisting of nine miles of water main.
2. Phase II completed in 1990 consisting of eighty-three miles of water main.
3. Phase II A completed in 1994 consisting of sixty-three miles of water main, with the water treatment facility in White Oak completed in 1998. The county began producing water for customers in this phase.
4. Phase II B completed in January 1998 consisting of ninety-seven miles of water main, two wells, and two elevated storage tanks.
5. Phase II C will be funded by USDA - Rural development and the approval of the bond referendum for General Obligation Bonds in the amount of \$6,000,000. The projected date of completion of this phase is 1999-2000 and will consist of ninety-seven miles of water main. The total number of residents served in the county with the completion of Phase II C is approximately 3,450.
6. Phase III is in the planning stage and is contingent upon funding and customer participation rate.

** The water and sewer plans should be referenced when making land development decisions.*

Solid Waste Collection

Currently there are about 100 solid waste sites in Bladen County. The garbage is collected every day but Wednesday and Sunday. Once the waste is collected out of the dumpsites it is carried to the solid waste transfer station where it is sorted and placed in transfer truck and hauled to the Sampson County landfill.

There is a \$32/ton commercial tipping fee.

The goal of Solid Waste Management is to reduce the number of solid waste sites, and make existing sites bigger. Sites along main thoroughfares in the county will be the first eliminated, hoping to reduce the amount of illegal dumping by people just passing through the county.

Fire Protection

Fire protection services are provided through fifteen fire tax and fire service districts, which cover the entire county. The county contracts with fire departments and rural volunteer fire departments to provide services to these fifteen districts.

Government Facilities

Most of the County Administrative offices are in the Bladen County Courthouse, which is located in downtown Elizabethtown, at the intersection of US 701 and NC 87. The courthouse, built in 1965, now houses federal and state offices in addition to the county offices. Other county offices which include the Central Services (operations, water dept., building inspections, vehicle maintenance), Animal Control, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Agriculture Extension Services are located on Smith Circle Drive just on the edge of town.

The Health Department, Division of Aging, Mental Health, Solid Waste, and Social Services are located on Mercer Mill Road. E-911, Veteran Affairs, and Board of Elections are located on South Cypress Street. The Economic Development and Planning Departments are located at 113 W. Broad Street. (All offices are located in Elizabethtown.)

Educational Facilities

Bladen Community College was initially located in a composite of rented buildings in Elizabethtown. The old Johnson Cotton Company property on Highway 701 was secured and became the location for administrative offices as well as for educational course offerings.

The college began full time operation in September of 1968. Initially, curriculum programs were offered in Cosmetology, Executive Secretarial Science, Business Administration, Industrial Engineering and Agricultural Engineering Technologies, Industrial Maintenance, Automotive Mechanics, and Nursing Assistant.

A site for a permanent campus near Dublin was secured, and phase one of the College building program began in the spring of 1970. The College moved to its permanent twenty-five acre campus in July 1971. Two buildings totaling 27,000 square feet were constructed.

The county has a total of fourteen public schools including; 3 High, 6 Middle, 4 Elementary and 1 Extended Hope. Average student population is 5,635 with a total of 718 teachers, principals and other staff. The schools transport 3,665 children daily on 93 school buses. A new school will be located in the Dublin area along HWY 410; and a school will be built southeast of Elizabethtown near HWY 87.

Libraries

The county's public library system offers a variety of services at its three locations in Elizabethtown, Clarkton, and Bladenboro. Large varieties of print materials such as books, newsprint, and periodicals are available in all locations. Other services include the bookmobile, homebound outreach program, youth outreach program, computer access, photocopy and fax machines, audio and video cassettes, and compact discs. The libraries also provide material from the North Carolina Library for the Blind. The main library, located in Elizabethtown, houses the Wanda Campbell Historical Room, which contains a donated collection of local history and genealogy material for use.

Healthcare

The Bladen County Hospital is a sixty-two bed facility with an active medical staff of family practitioners that practice family medicine and obstetrics, internal medicine specialists, and surgeons. The hospital is a county, non-profit facility, whose mission is a commitment to deliver quality, personalized healthcare to residents of Bladen County and the surrounding area.

The emergency department is staffed on a full-time basis with specially trained physicians and nurses. Bladen County Hospital also has a forty bed Medical-Surgical Unit, an Intensive Care Unit and an up-to-date Birthing Center. The surgical suite and ambulatory surgical section offers the latest in Laser and Laparoscopic surgery. The Imaging Department is equipped with the latest technology such as C.T. Scan, Nuclear Medicine, Ultrasound, Mammography, and a mobile MRI. Various tests can be performed in Cardiopulmonary, including EKG's, Stress Testing and Holter Monitoring. Also, a Cardiac Rehabilitation program and a Physical Therapy Department provide up to date treatments for patients requiring therapy. Vitalink, a mobile Intensive Care Unit, is stationed in Elizabethtown for immediate transfer to New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington. The hospital is served by three medical helicopter teams for transfer of patients in need of more extensive medical attention. The laboratory is open twenty-four hours a day to provide accurate, timely test results. The Business Office and Health Information Management Departments provide billing services and rapid turnaround on claims processing through a new computer system.

Bladen Medical Associates, a seven-doctor practice, is located two blocks from Bladen County Hospital and is a division of the hospital. Bladen Medical Associates has a satellite office in Bladenboro. Bladen County Hospital also has four rural health clinics spread throughout the county designed to serve its citizens and their primary healthcare needs. They are: BLADEN EAST MEDICAL CENTER, located 18 miles east of Elizabethtown on Highway 87 in the Carvers Creek Community; BLADEN URGENT CARE, located across the street from Bladen County Hospital Emergency Room; CLARKTON FAMILY MEDICAL CENTER, on E. Green Street; and DUBLIN MEDICAL CENTER, located on Highway 87 in Dublin.

Environmental & Natural Resources

Water Features

As noted in the introduction of the plan, Bladen County has many lakes, rivers and streams. These water features are significant natural resources and need protection. Currently, Bladen has a watershed/water supply ordinance that covers a small portion of the county in the East Arcadia area, and a flood plain map and ordinance that covers the entire county. The regulations serve to protect area water supply from runoff and other pollutants.

The ground-water resources are a major concern in rural areas where residents depend upon well water. Within the past five years ground-water usage has caused level changes in the aquifer, which is in the northwestern portion of the county along the 87 corridor where industries are located. Studies are underway by the US Geological Department to understand ground-water usage better in this area. Currently, the ground-water levels are stable. However, any new industry that may wish to use the ground-water resource in the future may cause severe water level problems with the aquifer.

Further, any industry that would want to locate near the Cape Fear River or other water feature would be required to go through an extensive permitting process to protect the waters

from additional pollution. Through creative open space and buffer regulations, Bladen County will be able to protect the existing beauty and usability of its existing water resources.

Parks and Recreation Inventory

Bladen has great parks and recreation resources, which include state owned parks and locally owned parks. The primary source for recreation in the county is the water areas. The areas include the Cape Fear, Black and South rivers, White Lake, Jones Lake State Park and Lake Singletary among other water features. They provide many with the opportunity to canoe, boat, fish and camp. These areas are important and need to continue to be protected. Also, all three lock and dams along the Cape Fear River are located within Bladen County.



Figure 27: Cape Fear River

In addition to the water features and their activities are the opportunities for hunting. Many sites are leased by hunting groups for the privilege of hunting on their land.

The Bladen County Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of year-round activities for all age groups and encourages everyone in the community, including persons with disabilities, to participate. The Department provides support services to assist in meeting the individual accessibility needs of persons wishing to participate in the programs. The Department recruits over 100 volunteers each year to assist with its programs. Recreational facilities and equipment are available for rental to the public. These include the gymnasium, ball fields, tennis courts, and picnic shelters.



Figure 28: View of the South River

Scenic Views and Sites

Many scenic views and sites are located in Bladen County. A major scenic view/corridor is the Cape Fear River with its steep banks and various overlooks. The South and Black River areas also provide several scenic views, especially from the perspective of a small vessel. Other areas include farmland, swamps, state forest and various rural settings – each providing enjoyment to the viewer.

Archaeological, Cultural & Historic Resources

Bladen County has many archaeological, cultural and historical sites and places. One of the more popular places is Tory Hole Park and Amphitheater -- located on the banks of the Cape

Fear River off Highway 701, bordering Elizabethtown. The amphitheater is used for plays and other stage events.

The county has recorded over 140 archaeological sites with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Recent investigations include the survey of the sunken remains of the *Thelma*, a 1913 steam paddle wheel riverboat, the last passenger steamboat to operate on the Cape Fear River, which was completed to design a boat ramp to avoid the site. The SHPO has also discovered and preserved seven prehistoric (ca. 1400s-1700s) Native American canoes, which have been returned to the White Lake area and Bladen Lake State Park.

As documented in the 1978 Land Use Plan, 119 historical and cultural places were identified throughout the county in a reconnaissance survey by the SHPO in the mid-1970s. The sites are in the 1978 Land Use Plan for Bladen County.

Bladen County also has eleven properties individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Figure 31), including five churches and several large plantations. Harmony Hall Plantation has received \$105,100 in state appropriations since 1985. Also, the SHPO has provided technical assistance for projects within the county including Harmony Hall, Trinity Methodist Church and the Bladenboro Elementary School.



Figure 29: Brown Marsh Presbyterian Church.



Figure 30: Elwell Ferry.



Figure 31: Lock and Dam No. 2.

The Cape Fear River used to be traversed by numerous ferries. Today, as seen in Figure 30, the Elwell Ferry is still in operation, crossing the Cape Fear River. Figure 31, displays lock and dam number two. The “lock” allows vessels to pass through.

All archaeological, cultural, and historical sites and places should be protected--helping to preserve significant information about the County’s past. When planning new development, these sites and places should be treated with sensitivity. Displayed below is a list of the National Register of Historic Places for Bladen County.

National Register of Historic Places for Bladen County

| | | |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Brown Marsh Presbyterian Church | Clarkton vicinity | 09/02/75 |
| John Hector Clark House | Clarkton vicinity | 05/20/87 |
| (former) Clarkton Depot | Clarkton | 12/23/86 |
| Desserette | White Oak vicinity | 10/07/87 |
| Harmony Hall | White Oak vicinity | 03/24/72 |
| Mt. Horeb Presbyterian Church and Cemetery | Council | 05/13/87 |
| Oakland Plantation | Carvers community | 04/25/72 |
| Purdie Place and Purdie Methodist Church | Tar Heel vicinity | 04/13/77 |
| South River Presbyterian Church | Garland vicinity | 05/23/96 |
| Trinity Methodist Church | Elizabethtown | 09/14/89 |
| Walnut Grove (Robeson Plantation) | Tar Heel vicinity | 05/29/75 |

Figure 32: National Register of Historic Places

4. Community Visioning and Goal Setting

Introduction

As noted in the Section 2, Land Use Planning Process, the visioning and goal setting phase of the process is a key element in developing a land use plan. Without a vision of how a community wants to grow, it cannot make a plan or establish goals to achieve the desired vision. The strategic plan “Bring on Bladen” provided the initial vision, and the Planning Board has made the vision more specific.

“Bring on Bladen” Land Use Vision

The goal established in the strategic plan is “...to implement land use planning within the county.” (page 21 “Bring on Bladen” strategic plan) The vision or policy statement reads as follows:

“Land use planning must be established and regulated on a county wide basis to protect our natural resources and the quality of life for our citizens. This protection will also improve the development of economic opportunities within the county.”

The County Commissioners further refined the vision in the fall of 1997.

Bladen County Land Use Vision

| |
|--|
| ◆ “In the best interest of its citizens, the Bladen County Commissioners take the long range view of protecting the natural resources of the county while providing a safe and attractive living environment for its citizens, as well as opportunities for quality education, recreation, and industrial growth. A fiscally secure and responsible local government is necessary in order to accomplish the growth and quality of life as envisioned by the Commissioners and, to this end, priorities will be set and, with proper planning the goals can be achieved in time. |
| ◆ The Bladen County Strategic Plan, <i>Bring On Bladen</i> , was completed in 1997. This plan involved the dedicated work of many citizen volunteers, focusing on several of these issues and describing an extensive plan of action. |
| ◆ The primary long-range goal is to ensure that the county citizens have a high quality of life. In order to achieve <i>and maintain</i> this goal the natural resources of the area must be protected. Clean air and water are paramount. The Cape Fear River and numerous lakes throughout the county must be cleaned and protected from future degradation. The many wildlife species living in the area must also be protected and, where advisable, management provided. |
| ◆ A goal in Bladen County is to have safe, healthy, attractive, clean and well kept towns, communities, and neighborhoods. Proper infrastructure is necessary for sewer, water, transportation, communications, energy, and recreation. Countywide sewer, parks and recreational facilities, and cutting edge technology are all important in providing this infrastructure in the county. |
| ◆ Other areas are also important to providing a high quality of life. Individuals must feel safe in their homes, at work, and elsewhere around the county. Crime rates must be lowered and the drug problem so often associated with other crimes must be significantly reduced. Quality health services must be provided with emphasis on prevention so that people stay healthy. |
| ◆ Perhaps the most important factor in ensuring a high quality of life in the future is the educational system, providing outstanding educational opportunities for all. Bladen County’s Commissioners want a highly rated school system operating in modern and well-kept schools. |
| ◆ Another important factor in providing a high quality of life is a strong economic and industrial base. Expanded and full industrial parks are envisioned, providing a healthy variety of industries and jobs. |
| ◆ The Commissioners recognize that achieving these visions on a cost-effective basis while maintaining a commitment to fiscal responsibility will require courage, creativity, and persistence. This Land Use Plan is a first step in the process of realizing our vision.” |

Specific Development Goals

The Planning Board reviewed the County Commissioners work and the background research contained in this plan. The Planning Board has examined the vision and developed the following goals.

Overall Goal:

PROVIDE FOR QUALITY GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY

Quality growth and development includes protecting natural resources, providing a safe and attractive environment, quality educational facilities, proper water and sewer, and parks and recreational facilities.

The Planning Board has identified the following land use categories and their appropriate location:

RESIDENTIAL

1. Identify appropriate areas for building single family, multi-family, modular, and manufactured homes.
 - Adequate services/infrastructure (including fire, roads, water and sewer)
 - Identify areas of caution (shrink - swell soil, swamps, and other natural impediments)
2. Areas for manufactured housing in parks.
 - Quality places to live (number of homes, size of lots, parking, streets, lights, maintenance)

COMMERCIAL

1. Access to services/utilities/infrastructure/population densities.
2. Sensitive to single family detached areas.

INDUSTRIAL

1. Shall be located in areas adjacent to existing industrial zoned areas within municipalities.
2. Additional areas will include those areas serviced by rail, highway, and other appropriate infrastructure and services.

RECREATIONAL

1. Located near existing natural resources.
2. Access to population (with the exception of hunting clubs and similar recreational uses).

INSTITUTIONAL/GOVERNMENTAL

1. Developed in areas with higher concentrations of population.
2. Adequate infrastructure/services should be planned or in place.

AGRICULTURAL

Maintain integrity of the existing agricultural lands - encroachment issues with other uses.

5. Bladen County Land Use Plan Recommendations

Planning History

Formal land use planning in Bladen County has a brief history. In the early 70's, the Division of Community Services completed a land use plan and sketch development plan for the county. The basic growth patterns identified during that planning process are present today with a few exceptions including recent industrial development during this decade. The county has realized its need to continue planning by beginning with a strategic plan.

The strategic plan "Bring on Bladen" was completed in May of 1997. The strategic plan was a community wide effort with public meetings held throughout the county. The plan included identifying a vision with goals and objectives for the environment, infrastructure and economic development, education and quality of life. In the plan, the "environment" task force established a goal to implement land use planning within the county. The county has hired a planning staff and established a planning board. The Planning Board and Staff have recommended a manufactured home park ordinance, which is now in effect, and with the guidance and technical contributions of the Division of Community Assistance, a land use plan. As the county looks ahead to 2010, it is becoming increasingly important for the county to continue planning for the effective use of its resources.

The Proposed Land Use Plan

This land use plan is a guide for the density of growth and development throughout the county. Its time frame is 1999-2010, with updating to be completed in 2005. The Planning Board researched the existing characteristics and development patterns including: land use, persons per square mile, natural impediments to development, cropland, water and sewer, and septic tank absorption fields.

Based on the findings, the Planning Board recommends identifying growth areas in the county using the following designations: low density rural growth, medium density rural growth, high density urban growth, and industrial corridor growth areas. The growth areas are identified on the proposed land use plan map and in detail within the following paragraphs.

Low Density Rural Development Areas

The areas displayed in white on the Proposed Land Use map represent regions that have significant natural resources and scattered development. The existing natural resources in the areas are impediments to urban density development and growth. It is expected that this region will continue to have low density rural development in the future. Development of infrastructure and various facilities to support urban growth would not be fiscally practical or environmentally responsible.

However, it is possible that the areas shown as low density rural in the southeastern portion of the county near East Arcadia may be developed as medium density development with the presence of water. In addition, the Highway 53 corridor north of the State Forest has water facilities, but at this time has not developed at a high density, because the natural limitations in the area prevent increased development.

Characteristics of the Area

Scattered low density rural residential and commercial development

Significant natural impediments to development including:

Flood Plain

Severe limitations in soils for septic tank absorption fields

Swamp

Lakes

Streams
Wetlands
Cropland is concentrated in specific areas
State forest and forest/woodland areas
Outdoor activities:
Hunting, fishing, boating swimming and camping
Lack of infrastructure including the absence of:
Water, sewer and gas,
Limited road networks
Low population density
Low traffic volumes
Limited fire protection

Development Goals within the Low Density Rural Growth Area

Protect natural resources
Provide for safe and attractive environments - development keeping in character with the existing development.
Promote the need for infrastructure improvements (water and sewer, etc.) for high density developments.
Promote low density rural residential and agricultural uses
Continue to provide and improve parks and recreational resources

Medium Density Rural Development Area

A considerable amount of the land located between the four major municipalities; Elizabethtown, Dublin, Bladenboro and Clarkton, is currently being developed in a rural setting with a moderate number of units. The areas shown in yellow represent this region. The area has water available, and suitable soils for continued medium density development. Two schools are planned to open here, encouraging residential development to continue. Also, efforts should be made to respect and protect existing agricultural lands from development encroachment.

Characteristics of the Area

Scattered low to medium density residential, commercial and industrial development
Natural impediments to development including:
Limited Flood Plain
Slight to moderate limitations in soils for septic tank absorption fields
Limited Swamp
Streams
Limited Wetlands
Significant cropland: encroachment issues
Infrastructure availability includes:
Water & gas (high potential for sewer)
Significant road networks
Medium population density
Medium traffic volumes
Excellent fire protection

Development Goals within the Medium Density Rural Growth Area

Provide for safe and attractive environments - development keeping in character with the existing development.

Promote residential development at medium densities to protect existing development, which includes existing cropland.

High Density Urban Development Area

The high density urban areas are identified as red on the land use plan map. The areas surround municipalities that have the necessary infrastructure to support higher density development. Urban growth should be encouraged in these areas where the appropriate infrastructure is located. All land uses can be supported within these areas.

Characteristics of the Area

Higher concentrations of all land use development
Natural impediments to development are limited
Infrastructure availability includes: water, sewer, and gas
High population densities
High traffic volumes
Excellent fire protection

Development Goals within the High Density Urban Development Area

Provide for safe and attractive environments - development keeping in character with the existing development.
Promote higher density development for all land uses.

Industrial Corridor Growth Area

The industrial corridor growth area includes land that has or will have the proper infrastructure for such development. Within these areas, it is possible that agricultural uses and residential uses will continue. Encroachment of new uses on existing should be addressed. For example, allowing a subdivision and neighborhood to develop next to a plant may create potential legal problems between the residents and the plant.

Characteristics of the Area

87 corridor north of Tar Heel:

Highway widening to four lanes
Close proximity to I-95
Potential for gas and water
Rail transportation
Limited natural impediments to development
Groundwater may be an issue for certain types of industrial growth
Significant cropland
Medium population densities
Medium traffic (However, widening may encourage higher traffic counts)
Excellent Fire protection

211 corridor:

Gas and water, with the potential for sewer extension
Rail transportation

Limited natural impediments to development
Significant cropland
Medium population densities
Medium traffic

Development Goals within the Industrial Corridor Growth Area

- Promote industrial growth
- Promote medium density residential growth

Implementing the plan

After review of the proposed land use plan at a meeting with the Planning Board and the County Commissioners on March 8, 1999, the Planning Board recommends the following as possible implementation strategies:

1. Partial County Zoning & Subdivision Regulations

The traditional method of plan implementation is adopting land use regulations such as zoning and subdivision ordinances. These ordinances will assist in encouraging quality growth as stated in the goals and recommendations of this plan. The application of these ordinances to the entire county at one time is the desired method. However, it is recommended that the county consider areas that may be ready for county zoning and subdivision regulation.

Areas to consider:

- Environmentally sensitive areas (environmental sensitivity - water shed, flood plain, groundwater protection)
- Growth Areas
(Also, areas that may be identified by community groups)

2. Investigate other avenues for implementing plan

It may be possible to implement some of the recommendations in this plan through ordinances that are already in place or by other means.

Means to consider:

- Inspections
- Health Department
- Water shed areas – limited area and regulation
- Federal, State and other regulations that are in operation or not being enforced
- Ordinances for specific issues versus zoning

3. Community Planning Groups

- Establish smaller community groups to discuss details of growth in their area. In addition, the community groups may discuss the desire and need of land use regulation in their specific area.

Conclusions

This plan and its goals should serve as a guide to future land use and growth within Bladen County. Any proposed development, or future utility/infrastructure expansion such as water and sewer, should be reviewed and considered in light of the information gathered in this

plan. Efforts should be made to link any capital improvements with this plan and future plans. This will enable the county to grow smart, using its resources in the most responsible way. By examining the existing conditions and possible future growth, the county will be able to allocate taxpayer resources in a comprehensive, “smart growth” manner.

The land use plan should be updated every five years. The 2000 census, will provide insight into current population, housing and socio-economic trends. The new information can be used to update the base that has been established with this plan.

Further, any action that the County Commissioners may take towards implementing this plan should be monitored to determine the effectiveness of such actions. The results of their actions may provide information for refining this plan and its goals and recommendations.

Finally, this land use plan should not to be considered a final product. It should be viewed as an evolving process for discussion of development issues. As the county continues to grow, the goals may change and therefore the recommendations of the plan may need to be reconsidered or amended.